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Book Notices.

"Out-doors at Idlewild; or, the Shaping of a Home on the Banks of the Hudson." By N. Parker Willis. CHARLES SCRIBNER: 1855.

THIS is to us an exceedingly winning book. And not by any means the least interesting part is the preface—a kind of baring the author's soul to the eyes of the public, which carries one over to him immediately, whatever may have been his feeling towards him previously. The frankness with which he admits that to him the world of future fame is nothing, and that he has chosen his course so as to get through the world with the greatest satisfaction to himself, and those who depended on him, is indicative of a reach of attainment of the true philosophic spirit which we had never given Willis credit for. The whole preface has a tone we like much; one of manly, justifiable defiance of a world from which he is conscious of having received much unmerited, harsh criticism, and by which he cares to make no more effort to be appreciated. We must confess, that though without any previous acquaintance with the author or knowledge of him, this preface gave an interest to his character, which is gratifying to us, whatever it may be to him, since to think well of another is in itself a delight.

The book itself is a sincere, truthful study of out-door nature, without any straining to find sentiment or any affectation of ecstatic delight, when it is found. For the most part, those who undertake to give us their ideas of the external world, will never be content to tell us simply what they see, but rather what they think they ought to see, and thinking they ought to see beauty everywhere, as the poets sometimes find it—and so arch all their skies with rainbows, or set them on fire with sunsets, and make their mountains rise, and their rivers run always most magnificently. To appreciate the beauty of the common-place, is a rarer gift than the world deems it.

Willis has gone into a mine, which lay too near home for our travel book writers to see, and we are sure has found a richer yield of the true, fine gold of the Creator's treasury than many who have worn out their lives in ceaseless seeking. For ourselves, we are wearied of books of wondrous things, and it is very refreshing to find a contentedly written book—it brings the mind a sense of quiet, like a common sun-shining day amidst stormy ones.

"Fudge Doings: being Tony Fudge's Record of the same." 2 vols. 12mo. CHARLES SCRIBNER: 1855.

WE are in doubt whether we ought to begin our notice of *Fudge Doings* with the illustrations or the book. The former are in themselves so admirable that we can hardly consider them as connected with the book, or as works by themselves. They are, to our mind, the best things Darley has yet done—their character is so subtle in its humor, so refined in their truth, that we do honestly believe that there is nothing of their kind so excellent, either in English or French illustration. If there is, we have, at least, never seen it. The engravers also deserve high credit for their part of the work.

But for the book we would like to say more than we can. It is a marvellous piece of social anatomizing—brilliant with the flashes of a keen, polished scalpel, which, with an ease which astonishes one, cuts down into the heart of our parvenu life. The characters are not rounded out—filled up—but sketched so truly, and in so masterly a manner, that we receive an impression of a power sufficient to do almost anything the author desires. For our individual likings it is too brilliant—we would like oftener to go down into some honest, earnest

heart, and be at rest for a moment, forgetting the selfish crowd that do *Fudge Doings*. Rascality and mad pride are no less common, perhaps, than the book makes them, but let us in books get away from them if we can. Yet, this is not a just criticism on this book, which is professedly a piece of social sketching, not a probing the possible depths of some true human heart.

Yet, with true artistic skill the author has just brought enough of beauty and worth into his plot to give the surface of the rest its proper place. The good Uncle Truman (we want to call him Uncle) and dear, darling Kitty are enough to excuse Mr. Tony Fudge from so exposing the secrets of his family to the world. Blessed child! if ever we go to Newtown, we shall look for her round childish face in all the streets—she will never be anything but a child, if she grows grey in this life—nor will her face ever be anything but round and happy whatever sorrows may tug at her heart.

We cannot pass without compliment the style in which these books are got up by Scribner. They are, indeed, superb. *Fudge Doings* especially challenges comparison with anything of the time. They are stereotyped by W. H. Tinson, and printed by Taws & Russell.

"Amabel." BUNCE & BROTHER. 1855.

A PLEASANTLY-TOLD story, with a somewhat extravagant plot, but, perhaps, not more so than the mass of novel-readers demand. The life of Amabel is an interesting one, as that of a true woman suffering from the errors of others, must always be. To the ladies it seems to be an attractive book, since we have hardly been able to get hold of it long enough to look it over,—somebody has been reading it ever since we took it home.

"Fashion and Famine." By Mrs. Ann. S. Stephens. BUNCE & BROTHER. 1855.

THIS book is too well known to need any notice from us. It is a highly-wrought story,—with common-place materials under stage-lights. The book is popular, and will have its way as a thing for the multitude, but will follow the general rule of such things, and be another proof that a permanent reputation was never attained at once.

"High Life in New York." By Jonathan Slick, Esq. BUNCE & BROTHER. 1855.

THE lovers of the Yankee extravagance will be pleased to find these well-known papers in a substantial form, humorously illustrated.

"Richard the Lion Hearted." JAMES S. DICKERSON. 16mo., pp. 293.

THERE is more "truth than poetry" in this little volume, which cannot be said of most accounts of Lion-hearted King of England. The incidents of his life are given with historic accuracy in connection with events of great political importance, and upon which his genius exercised a controlling influence; there is no attempt to embellish—the facts alone are so romantic, there is no call for exaggeration to heighten their effect. King Richard was not a mere hero of chivalric times; he was a military genius, and with this combined other characteristics not often found in the same individual. He was not a good man, according to our standard; for he was a rebellious son, and he was sometimes cruel. The age in which he lived, however, was just emerging from barbarous prejudices, and if it was bad, Richard was infinitely better.

We have not in our reading encountered a more graphic, lucid, and concise history of that part of the Crusades with which his name is associated, than in this little volume. The jealousies of the rival powers, the motives which prompted them, and the causes which brought about the unsuccessful results of that crusade, are clearly set forth—the libels particu-

larly on Richard's character; for instance, the death of Conrad, are successfully refuted. We are not aware of any thing new in this; but the few words in which the story is told, makes its present relation valuable to the young as well as to the old, who have but little time to read.

The most interesting episodes are, *The Conquest of Cyprus*—an account of the *Assassins*—a *Naval Engagement*—*Saladin*—and the short career of an *Early Democrat*.

At this time the history of Richard is of more than usual interest. Some hundred years ago an intimate alliance was formed between Philip (of France) and Richard, such as has had no parallel in the history of France and England until our time, between Louis Napoleon and Queen Victoria, with this difference, that as the past was against, the present is in favor of the Turk.

This book is the first of a series, to be edited and partly written, by the REV. FRANCIS L. HAWKS, a sufficient guarantee of historical accuracy and attractive style. It is tolerably illustrated and very well printed.

Graham's for January opens a new volume interestingly as usual. A pleasant poem by Stoddard,—a Norse fragment, by Lowell, and the leading article on St. Paul's and its environs, are among its principal attractions.

WE give another extract from Ruskin's Lectures, noticed in our last number. It has too much common sense to be forgotten.

"Of all the wastes of time and sense which modernism has invented—and they are many—none are so ridiculous as this endeavor to represent past history. What do you suppose our descendants will care for our imaginations of the events of former days? Suppose the Greeks, instead of representing their own warriors as they fought at Marathon, had left us nothing but their imaginations of Egyptian battles; and suppose the Italians, in like manner, instead of portraits of Can Grande, and Dante, or of Leo the Tenth and Raphael, had left us nothing but imaginary portraits of Pericles and Miltiades? What fools we should have thought them! how bitterly we should have been provoked with their folly! And that is precisely what our descendants will feel towards us, so far as our grand historical and classical schools are concerned.

"And now let me remind you but of one thing more. As you examine into the career of historical painting, you will be more and more struck with the fact I have this evening stated to you—that none was ever truly great but that which represented the living forms and daily deeds of the people among whom it arose; that all precious historical work records, not the past, but the present. Remember, therefore, that it is not so much in buying pictures, as in being pictures, that you can encourage a noble school. The best patronage of Art is not that which seeks for the pleasures of sentiment in a vague ideality, nor for beauty of form in a marble image; but that which educates your children into living heroes, and binds down the flights and the fondnesses of the heart into practical duty and faithful devotion."

MR. RANDOLPH ROGERS has had on exhibition for some few weeks past, at the rooms of the N. A. D., a collection of his works, recently brought out from Italy. There are a Ruth—a Skater-boy trying the ice, an *alto-relievo* of Jacob and Rachel, a Cupid breaking his bow, and a portrait bust. The portrait pleased us particularly, being full of individuality; and of the statues, that of the Skater-boy was, to our taste, the most attractive, as much from the homeliness of the conception as the faithful realization of the whole design. Mr. Rogers, we understand, will soon return to Italy.